

WAR CRIMES TRIAL OF SUBHAN Torture victim of '71 testifies at tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A war crimes victim yesterday testified that Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdus Subhan shot him after lining him and other detainees up at the premises of a school in Pabna during the Liberation War.

Three of his chest bones were broken in the shooting, Rustam Ali told the International Crimes Tribunal-2.

But that was not the end. Subhan also directed the Pakistani soldiers, who accompanied him in the incident on April 13, 1971, to charge him with bayonet, which left him senseless.

Subhan also shot a detainee dead and injured another, who was later killed by the Pakistani army and Biharis as he had tried to escape by running through the school field, he said.

"... I want his [Subhan] execution," Rustam, the fourth prosecution witness in Subhan's case, told the tribunal after identifying him in the dock.

The Jamaat nayeb-e-ameer faces nine charges, including genocide and murders committed in Pabna during the war. Subhan, however, pleaded not guilty before the court.

During his 50-minute testimony, Rustam, a resident of Juktitala village in Iswardi upazila of Pabna, said he had been working at the shop of Jayenuddin in Pakshi Bazar before 1971.

On the morning of April 13, 1971, Rustam, Joyenuddin and his son-in-law went to Saraghat village to collect some dues. While returning from the village, the trio had heard gunshots and noticed fire in Juktitala.

"Feeling scared, we hid ourselves in a bamboo bush behind one Maizuddin of Juktitala.

Cops probing, people sceptical

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Asked, Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Narayanganj DB, said he was unaware of any relations between Awal and Hossain.

Awal received Hossain's blessing during his stint as sub-inspector in Siddhiganj, and maintained close links with the local AL leader even after his transfer to the DB office in Narayanganj, said a number of locals.

"Awal addresses Hossain as mama [uncle]," said a resident of Mijmiji area, asking not to be named.

Many locals said such close ties between the IO and the main accused would harm the police investigation.

Awal, however, claimed that he has no links with Hossain.

Contacted, the police officer said he first came to know Hossain on May 6 last year while he was investigating the deaths of Border Guard Bangladesh jawans in clashes with Hefajat-e Islam men in Siddhiganj. And he met Hossain as part of the investigation.

On Tuesday, three Rab officials were dismissed from the services for their alleged involvement in the abductions and killings after Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam alleged that some Rab members abducted and murdered Nazrul in exchange for Tk 6 crore.

The Rab officials are Lt Col Tareque Sayeed Mohammad, Maj Arif Hossain and Lt Commander SM Masud Rana. Tareque is son-in-law of Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

None of the six accused in the murder case could be arrested even a week after six bodies, including that of Nazrul, were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river. Another body was

recovered from the river on May 1.

On April 27, Nazrul and his four aides, senior lawyer Chandan Sarker and his driver were abducted almost at the same time after they left the court area by two cars in Narayanganj.

PROBE BODY FORMED
Complying with a High Court order, the government yesterday formed a seven-member committee to see whether Rab members or any other law enforcers were involved in the abductions and murders.

The probe body, headed by Additional Secretary to the public administration ministry Md Shahjahan Ali Mollah, will also investigate if there was any negligence on the part of the law enforcers in rescuing the victims, said Secretary to the ministry Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury.

The committee with two officials each from the public administration, law and home ministries will submit a progress report to the HC within a week.

However, the home ministry was yet to respond to the National Human Rights Commission's request to set up a three-member committee by yesterday to investigate the murders in Narayanganj.

In a letter to the ministry on Tuesday, the NHRC suggested making a retired judge the head of the probe body with a retired senior police officer and a prominent human rights activist as its members.

VICTIMS WERE STRANGLED

All the seven victims were first hit in the head and then strangled with ropes, say their post-mortem reports.

The victims were killed 48 to 72 hours before the post-mortem, conducted between April 30 night and

the next morning, said Dulal Chandra Chowdhury, civil surgeon of General (Victoria) Hospital in Narayanganj.

All the victims were killed in the same manner, indicating that the killers were trained and professional.

The killers had cut the victims' bellies below the navel to make sure that the corpses did not float, said the report.

Dulal received the reports yesterday from Dr Asaduzzaman Miah, chief of the medical board that conducted the post-mortem.

Talking to journalists at his Secretariat office yesterday, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal claimed that there was satisfactory progress in the probe.

"The investigation in the murder case is at the final stage. We hope to disclose everything before the nation soon."

He said the main accused are holed up inside the country and will be arrested soon.

On the dismissal of three Rab officials for their alleged involvement in the abductions and killings, Kamal said whoever is found guilty will be punished.

Rab has many successes, and cannot be tainted because of anyone, he added.

In another development, police seized three firearms belonging to Hossain and his aides, raiding the houses of the ward councillor's followers in Siddhiganj.

Earlier, the licence of these firearms had been cancelled.

On Tuesday, police seized two shotguns in a raid on the houses of Hossain's elder brother Nur Uddin and his bodyguard Jamal.

He also said the other programmes of Modi, including the meeting with intellectuals and the 'Ganga pooja' have been granted permission. "They are deliberately making an issue out of it."

But Jaitley rejected his claim saying BJP has not made any request for an alternative site where only 2,000 persons can be accommodated. "We are not out of our mind to seek permission for a meeting of our PM candidate at a place which can accommodate only 2,000 persons," he said.

Jaitley spoke to Chief Election Commissioner VS Sampath and wrote three separate letters on the issue, demanding immediate removal of Yadav alleging a free and fair election is not possible in Varanasi if he continues in the post.

"We are totally disappointed with the Election Commission when it sits

at a place which can accommodate only 2,000 persons," he said.

The BJP leader, however, then hastened to add that the case of refugees from Bangladesh was different and that it was the responsibility of all the states of India to rehabilitate them.

The government will make arrangements to bring them back after the verification is completed, said a Bangladesh foreign ministry official.

HC ORDER ON N'GANJ SC official faces music for not acting on time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday issued a show cause notice to one of its officials for not communicating a High Court order over the abduction and killing of seven people in Narayanganj to the government on time.

The SC registrar's office issued the notice asking Mohammad Hossain, a superintendent of the Criminal Miscellaneous Section, to explain in three days why he had delayed communicating the order to the respondents.

In a suo moto rule, the HC on May 5 ordered the government to form a seven-member committee headed by an additional secretary of the public administration ministry to probe the incident.

It also asked the government not to involve the Rapid Action Battalion in the investigation, but directed the elite force chief to conduct a departmental enquiry to find out whether any Rab personnel had been involved in the abductions and killings.

However, the order was not sent to the government officials until 2:30pm yesterday, SC Registrar AKM Shamsul Islam told The Daily Star.

The bench of Justice Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore also told the court officials concerned to pass the order to the government authorities through a special messenger immediately.

The respondents reportedly said they would execute the HC order after receiving its copy.

Transaction

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driver were abducted around the same time on April 27 after they left the court area in Narayanganj by two cars. Six bodies, including those of Nazrul and Chandan, were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river three days later, and another the following day.

Narayanganj ward-4 Councillor Nur Hossain was made the prime accused in the murder case filed in connection with the incident.

Talking to The Daily Star, several bankers said the BB investigation would unearth who had paid the money to whom.

Contacted, K Shamshi Tabrez, managing director of Dutch-Bangla Bank, declined to say whether the bank authorities were looking into the matter that created a lot of sensation.

Shafiqul Alam, managing director of Jamuna Bank, said the bank was not aware of any transaction linked to the murders.

Wishing not to be named, another senior Jamuna Bank official, however, confirmed that an accused in the murder case had an FDR (fixed deposit) worth Tk 40 lakh, a savings account and a current account with Jamuna Bank's Rayerbagh branch and that a transaction took place from the savings account last month.

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PADMA BRIDGE GRAFT CONSPIRACY

ACC gets useful documents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has obtained some documents that would help advance the investigation of the alleged conspiracy of corruption in appointing Canadian firm SNC Lavalin as consultant for the \$2.9 billion Padma bridge project, the commission chief said yesterday.

"The ACC got some information using its own source," ACC Commissioner Mohammad Shahabuddin told some journalists at his office in the capital.

Three ex-officials of SNC Lavalin—Mohammad Ismail, Ramesh Shah and Kevin Wales, now standing trial in a Canadian court for corruption—allegedly tried to bribe Bangladesh

officials to help the consultancy firm get the supervision work of the World Bank-funded project.

Ramesh allegedly maintained a diary in which he wrote the names of several powerful people in Bangladesh and the amounts of bribe each would be given to get the job.

Shahabuddin said the document ACC obtained now would serve the purpose, for which Ramesh's diary was required. "Based on this document we can assess the truth or fallacy behind the conspiracy allegation."

The anti-graft commission has launched two investigations into the allegations of corruption after the World Bank drew its attention on the matter in October 2011.

Dismissal proves

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this incident," BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

He alleged that the Sheikh Hasina-led government was using Rab, police and even BGB members for killings, abductions and forced disappearances of opposition men to stay in power illegally.

The BNP spokesperson said people could not any more keep faith in the law enforcement agencies involved in killing people brutally instead of protecting them.

"People across the country have raised the question of whether such kinds of law enforcement agencies are required. We support this sentiment," the BNP leader added.

Pointing to the gruesome killings in Narayanganj, Fakhrul said the government should step down as it had failed to protect people's lives.

About the Rab probe committee on the Narayanganj incident, he said people had no confidence in the committee as Rab members themselves were involved in the killings.

Fakhrul said the BNP would soon come up with a series of programmes to

free people from the fear of killings, abductions and forced disappearances.

Earlier, at a joint meeting of the BNP and its front organisations at Nayapaltan office, the party finalised a 14-day programme starting from May 27, including discussions and milad and doa mahfil, to mark the 33rd death anniversary of late president and BNP founder Ziaur Rahman.

NO BNP RALLY IN N'GANJ

BNP insiders said party Chairperson Khaleda Zia is likely to visit Narayanganj on May 14 to express solidarity with the people of Narayanganj and to console the family members of the dead.

Taimur Alam Khandaker, president of Narayanganj district unit BNP, yesterday submitted an application to Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC), seeking its permission to hold a rally at Nitaiganj ground.

The NCC, however, said it would not give permission to the BNP to hold a rally.

"Considering the law and order in the city, we can't give permission to any major party for holding a rally here. Also, there is a hospital next to the rally ground. So the BNP can't organise the rally at Nitaiganj ground," NCC Mayor Selina Hayat told

Yvonne.

In a press release yesterday, Rab said anyone involved in the abduction and murder would be tried and punished. It said since the formation of the force in 2004, at least 1,949 Rab personnel had been penalised, including being fined, dismissed, and jailed for indiscipline and criminal activities.

Rab, police and a government probe body is investigating the abduction and murder separately.

3 dismissed Rab officials

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surveillance, said a close family member of Tareque.

Tareque held the position of lieutenant colonel in the army and is the son-in-law of Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, minister for disaster management and relief.

Director General of Rab Mokhlesur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday, "Investigation is going on into the incident [killings]. If any former Rab officials are found guilty they will be punished as per existing laws of the country."

Talking to BBC Bangla Service, Prime Minister's Adviser HT Imam said the trio had been sent on forced retirement based on primary evidence.

BNP gives new figure

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political identities of almost all the victims was distributed among reporters on CDs and in hard copies.

This was for the first time the BNP came up with any details of the victims.

Speaking at a programme at the Jatiya Press Club on April 28, Fakhrul claimed that 310 opposition men were killed by Rab, police and AL cadres